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INTRODUCTION

~~THE CAUSES OF THE VIETNAMESE
AND OTHER GREAT REVOLUTIONS~~

COMPARATIVE METHOD IN THE STUDY OF THE CAUSES
FOR THE VIETNAMESE REVOLUTION IN 1945

[Introduction with brief summary of events in Vietnam
from 9. March to 2. Sept. 1945]

I am trying to write a book on the causes of the Vietnamese Revolution in 1945. When choosing that subject a few years ago, I made three important assumptions:

- 1) that there had been a revolution; meaning*
- 2) that it was Vietnamese;
- 3) that it happened in 1945 and only then.

In the beginning, I did not question these assumptions, or try to make them clear to myself. Instead I plunged into French, British and United States' archives in the hope that they would reveal the hidden forces of revolution. ~~to me~~. It is only now, after several years of swimming in the enormous paper pools of Western National Archives that I feel a pressing need to organize my ideas more rigidly. The paper I present here is thus an attempt to define my research project theoretically. It is also meant to be an outline for the introduction to my book.

My paper is theoretical in the sense that

* That "revolution" is an appropriate term for certain events occurring in Viet Bac, Hanoi, Huế, Saigon and other Vietnamese provinces in 1945.

it deals with the problem of establishing logically acceptable explanations of the Vietnamese 1945 Revolution; not in the sense that it is based upon extensive reading in revolutionary theory.

What did my three original assumptions mean?

1) The first assumption was that "revolution" was a suitable term for describing the 1945 events. What does the revolution mean? When the Vietnamese participants of the Vietnamese Revolution referred to it later as "the August Revolution", that was part of a nation-building mythology, built on a political tradition from the French Jacobins in the 1790s over the great 1917 October Revolution in St. Petersburg to the programmatic discussions of the Comintern. The choice of the term "the August Revolution" marked a strong attachment to the Soviet revolutionary experience, while the opening sentences of the Vietnamese declaration of independence on 2 September 1945 emphasized the American and French revolutionary heritage, in that order. There was not, and could not be any open attachment to the yet not victorious Chinese revolution, also because the fate of the new Vietnamese Republic depended on Chiang Kai-shek's tolerance.

Within the context of revolutionary nation-building rhetoric, it is important to have connections and traditions, but it is not of any

overriding importance to have a precise definition of the term "Revolution", but that should be required from the historian who sets out to logically explain a given revolution. My proposal for a definition of "Revolution" is:

"A constitution or reconstitution of a state with a radical transformation of society as goal and ~~to~~ effect."

When I prefer that definition to many others which have been suggested, it is because it links the term "revolution" to social transformation without seeing that transformation as part of the revolution itself. A revolution is a "(re)constitution of a state", but only if that (re)constitution aims at and leads to radical social change. A (re)constitution which aims at the preservation of or reestablishment of an existing or traditional social order, like that of Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam, is not a revolution.

2) What does it mean that the revolution was Vietnamese? That does not simply mean that it was that part of the "world revolution" which happened in a country called Vietnam. What made the August Revolution Vietnamese, was not that it happened in "Vietnam", but that it led to the establishment of a state called "Vietnam". Although most revolutionary leaders

have had universal aims, the successful among them have limited their ambitions to the constitution and preservation of one state, which has then been used as a lever to carry out social reform from above. What happened in Hanoi, Huế and Saigon in 1945, can be seen as the constitution of a new state in commanding authority in three parts of a formerly French colony; or it can be seen as a reconstitution of the old monarchical state that the outside world referred to as "Annam". In the first interpretation, the Vietnamese revolution resembles its American precedent; in the second interpretation it looks more like the French and Russian revolutions. In both cases it was a Vietnamese revolution, because it ^{consisted} ~~led~~ ⁱⁿ the constitution of a state called "Vietnam", and because it aimed at and effected radical social transformation.

3) What does it mean that the Vietnamese Revolution happened in 1945? That question requires two answers. First, I must argue that the revolution happened within one year, rather than being a drawn out process from 1945 to the conquest of Saigon and constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in 1975/76. Next, I shall have to argue that the constitution of the Vietnamese state took place in 1945, and not in 1954 or 1975.

I much prefer to see a revolution as a

relatively short sequence of events by which a new group of actors take over the state or establish a new one. When I prefer short sequences to larger processes, it has two main reasons:

1) A short chain of events can to a great extent be explained by factors existing prior to those events, while longer and more complex processes must be explained not only by ~~existing but~~ by conditions ~~but~~ existing before the revolution, but by factors only evolving during the process itself. If we say that the Vietnamese Revolution was a process lasting from 1945 to 1975, it is impossible to explain it adequately without involving causal factors which only evolved after 1945. But then the chronological distinction between cause and effect is lost. I therefore find it hard, or close to impossible, to establish an over-all causal explanation for a drawn-out revolution. A researcher with that concept, the researcher will feel compelled to limit the causal arguments to the initial phase, or outbreak of the revolution. But then he or she is in fact back at my definition.

2) The aim of explaining historical phenomena, such as revolutions, is to develop some sort of generalizable insight, not only in each separate case, but on those phenomena as categories of ~~human events~~ sociological or political events. Such generalizable insight

requires comparison. But long and complex processes are far more difficult to compare than short sequences of events. The ^{more} ~~narrower~~ definition of revolution and precise the definition is, the more possible it is to compare one revolution to another.

In the late 1930s, two so-called natural historians, Crane Brinton and George Savoyet Petee, both published books with systematic comparisons of revolutions. My definition of "revolution" is elaborated from that of Petee. But their comparative experiments have had little impact on the historiography of the great revolutions. In 1979 came another book with a similarly ambitious comparative ambition, and that one, I believe, has the potential for both for stimulating historical research of each of the historical revolutions and for providing basis for discussions among historians specializing in different revolutions. The book is Theda Skocpol's States and Social Revolutions.¹ It is one of the very fortunate rediscoveries on the part of sociologists of history, chronology and change. The dominant name in this trend of historical sociology is Charles Tilly who has studied a great number

¹ Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China, 1979. See also T. Skocpol & Margaret Somers, "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry", Comparative Studies in Society 2

↪ and History, Vol. 22, No. 2, Apr. 1980, pp. 174-197; and T. Skocpol, "Social Revolutions and Mass Mobilization", World Politics, Vol. XL, No. 2, Jan. 1988, pp. 147-168.

of historical revolts. I find Theda Skocpol's book so stimulating that I shall devote most of this paper to a discussion of her methods and findings. That discussion will then be the basis for the choice of my own comparative approach to the Vietnamese Revolution.

Theda Skocpol defines her subject as "successful social revolutions". Her three cases are the French, Russian and Chinese. She seems to think that those three were the only cases of "successful social revolutions", occurring before the Second World War, with a possible exception for the Mexican Revolution.¹ Her comparative method is derived from John Stuart Mill, and she is strongly influenced by Barrington Moore Jr. She distinguishes between two comparative methods, which both presuppose that the comparatist has selected a well defined subject of study and has developed a hypothesis on the subject's causes and/or effects.

The first is "the method of agreement" which consists in locating a number of cases of a given phenomenon and to demonstrate that they have a set of causes in common:

"First, one can try to establish that several cases, having in common the phenomenon one is trying to explain also have in

¹ p. 287

common a set of causal factors, although they vary in other ways that might have seemed causally relevant." (1)

The second is "the method of difference", aiming at locating other cases which do not belong to the same phenomenon, but which otherwise resemble the positive 'cases' as much as possible.

States and Social Revolutions primarily practises the first method. The author compares the French, Russian and Chinese revolutions and shows that they had the same set of causes and the same main effect. But she also practises the second method. In dealing with the causes of the outbreak of her three revolutions, Theda Skocpol uses 'non-revolutions': the Prussian reform movement 1807-1814, the Japanese Meiji Restoration 1868-1873, and the failed Russian Revolution in 1905 as counter-points.

Before turning to what I find stimulating in Skocpol's book, I shall go through what I see as methodological flaws in her approach.

Theda Skocpol's ambition is to construct a generalizable theory on social revolution. She is somewhat hesitant in expressing that ambition, but the following quotation should demonstrate that she has it:

(1) p. 36

"Unfortunately, disillusioned historians sometimes conclude that their discipline should avoid social-scientific theories altogether. They advocate instead analyzing revolutions case by case, each in its own ~~right~~ analytic terms [...]. Fortunately, a method is available to aid in the development of [...] explanations of revolutions, at once generalizable across cases and historically sensitive [...]. To generalize about social revolutions, to develop explanations of their causes and outcomes, we can employ comparative historical analysis [...]"⁽¹⁾

If you intend to construct a general theory, it is necessary to test it by trying to falsify it 'of course hoping that the falsification will fail'. Theda Skocpol also says that her method is to develop, test and refine causal explanatory hypotheses,⁽²⁾ and that the comparisons shall "provide a valuable check, or anchor, for theoretical speculation."⁽³⁾ Still I have not been able to find in Theda Skocpol's book any real attempt to falsify her hypotheses or to try out rival hypotheses. Instead she sets out to demonstrate similarities between three positive cases and basic differences between those cases and selected negative cases. It is fully acceptable to do that, indeed highly stimulating, but it is not the way

(1) p. 35~~x~~ (2) p. 36 (3) p. 39

To establish a generalizable theory on the causation of revolutions. In her attempt to set up a generalizable theory, Theda Skocpol selects a certain number of revolutions and shows that they were all caused by (a) a political crisis in the existing regime, due to external pressure; (b) an erosion of state authority, due either to lack of control of the dominant class, or to the destruction of the repressive institutions in warfare; (c) agrarian structures with a potential for rural revolt. Then she selects a number of non-revolutions which resemble the revolutions in that they were also great historical changes, ~~coming about in reaction to crises~~. In each case Skocpol finds that those non-revolutions were also caused by (a) - external pressure, but that either (b) or (c) or both were missing. Thus she seems to conclude, although she does not state it clearly, that successful social revolutions occur when and only when (a) + (b) + (c).

The weakness of this inductive argument resides in her criterion for the selection of cases. That criterion is some sort of general similarity which we might call significant political change. The selective criterion is therefore the outcome of a causal process, not the causes involved. What Theda Skocpol should have done, was to locate all known cases of (a) + (b) + (c) and see if they all led to "successful social revolution".

That definition has already been accepted in Negro - Union Negroes' study
 were revolutionary by being accepted in Negro - Union Negroes' study
 revolution. The first part "in the light of Skocpol's definition" the upheaval in
 contemporary W is a case of revolution far excellent. (pp. 13-14)

If she could find one which did not, her theory would have been falsified and thus not generalizable. I find it very likely that she would have found several.

Still I am convinced that Theda Skocpol is correct in pointing to a combination of external military pressure (a), erosion of the core institutions of the state (b), widespread rural revolt (c), as necessary causes for the French, Russian and Chinese revolutions.¹ But I think it would be possible to find many cases where (a) + (b) + (c) has led to disintegration, foreign occupation or colonization instead of revolution. Thus (a) + (b) + (c) are not sufficient causes. At least one additional factor (d) must be added, which is the existence of more or less organized groups, classes or parties with nation building and state-building aspirations and more or less programmatic ideas about political and social reform.

The next methodological flaw in Theda Skocpol's book relates to her definition of the phenomenon she sets out to study: "successful social revolution". * That definition has three elements:

a) Revolutions are "rapid, basic transformations of a society's state and class

¹ Although it is just a little tricky to include the financial crisis of the French monarchy under the heading "external military pressure", even if that crisis originated in war debts.

Structures ... " (1)

b) Social revolutions include moral revolts effecting social change: "Social revolutions are [...] accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below [...]" (2)

c) Successful social revolutions lead to the establishment of new centralized states:

" [...] this definition makes successful sociopolitical transformation - actual change of state and class structures - part of the specification of what is to be called a social revolution [...]. my concept of social revolution necessarily highlights successful change as a basic defining feature."

As Skocpol herself emphasizes, this means that her definition is complex: " [...] it identifies a complex object of explanation [...] rather than [...] concentrating only upon one analytic feature [...]" (3) When a definition is set to include three variables, it is essential for the researcher to avoid the temptation to draw conclusions from the study which were already included in the

(1) p. 4 (2) Ibid. (3) p. 5

definition. Skocpol has not withstood that temptation. In her conclusion, some of the same factors as were included in the ~~in~~ definition do indeed reappear ~~as the book~~ among the study's main findings. She in the beginning she defined social revolution as requiring rural revolts, and in the end she concluded that widespread agrarian structures with an option for widespread rural revolt was a necessary condition for successful social revolutions. In the beginning she defined a successful social revolution as requiring the establishment of a new centralized state, and in the end she highlighted as one of her major conclusions that social revolutions lead to the establishment of centralized states. Although not entirely surprising, I regard both of these findings as essential, but their importance is reduced by the fact that they were already included in the definition which was used as groundwork for the selection of cases. A less complex definition would have allowed her findings to evolve from the study itself, but then the selection of cases might have had to be different.

Another regrettable effect of the complex definition is its effect on the duration of each revolution under study. Since success is included in the definition, Skocpol finds herself compelled to stretch out each

revolution from its outbreak to the moment when its success in establishing a centralized state was assured. This does not seriously distort the concept of the Russian Revolution which in Skocpol's opinion lasted from 1917 to 1921 (4 years), but the French Revolution is seen as an eleven years long process from 1789 to 1800, and the Chinese Revolution is accorded as much as 38 years (1911-1949).⁽¹⁾ If the Vietnamese Revolution should be handled similarly, it would have to be set from 1945 to 1975. #

The extremely different duration of Skocpol's three cases has serious effects on the degree of precision in her comparisons, especially the comparison of the Russian and Chinese Revolutions, of which the latter started six years before the former, but was only accomplished 28 years after the Russian one had been concluded. The revolutions would have been much easier to compare if they were defined, such as I have already suggested, as the ~~re~~ (re) constitution of a state. The French Revolution would then have lasted from 1789 to 1791; the Russian Revolution would only comprise the dramatic events of 1917, and China

(1) Skocpol sees this as "more fruitful" than to say there had been two Chinese revolutions: p. 303, note 99.

would have had two revolutions, one in 1911 and one in 1949. The first of the two would not satisfy Skocpol's success criterion, however, since it led to disintegration rather than to the establishment of a centralized state. For that very reason the next Chinese Revolution could not consist in toppling a regime in the capital of the state, but instead had to come as the end result of a drawn out civil war in a more or less stateless society.

Skocpol's concept of revolution as a process lasting till the establishment of a centralized state ~~too~~ also leads her to lose sight of one rather obvious and highly significant effect of revolution, namely counter-revolution. Skocpol's book is 'divided' in two sections, the first on the "Causes of Social Revolutions [...]" ; the second on the "Outcomes of Social Revolutions [...]" The strange thing is that this agenda in fact leaves out the revolution itself, and a revolution which is considered to have lasted many years. One of the reasons why Skocpol prefers to concentrate on causes and outcomes rather than revolution itself, is that she does not want to repeat the works of the natural historians. But the omission ironically leads her to share the disregard of the natural historians for the importance of counter-revolution. The establishment of a strong central state bureaucracy, which Skocpol sees as the major outcome of social revolutions, can as well be seen as an

effect of the new regime's reactions to counter-revolution. When a historian sets out to study the period that follows after a revolution, such as France 1792-1800, Russia 1918-1921, or Vietnam 1946-1975, I think "Counter-Revolution" might be an appropriate heading. ~~In French the historiography of~~ Among historians of the French Revolution, there has been a tendency these last two decades to rediscover the importance of counter-revolution, both from internal and external forces.

I have to add two more weaknesses in Skocpol's methodological approach. The first has to do with anachronism. In traditional historical inquiry it is normal to compare chronologically, that is to describe two different situations, one in year X and one in year Y, compare them and ask what had changed, how and why. When doing this, the conscientious historian will normally be aware of one obvious difference: since X occurred before Y, the experience of X could be present in the minds of the actors in situation Y. If a historian asks why the ~~Russian Revolution~~ failed revolutionaries failed in Russia 1905, but succeeded in 1917, learning from the 1905 experience will form a part of the explanation. Although Skocpol also

mentions that factor, she does not really take it into account. Her methodological approach leads her to consider each case more or less independent of the others. That is a mild form of anachronism.

[In 1966, when Barrington Moore Jr. published his comparisons of liberal, democratic, fascist and communist models of development, his critics remarked that he compared national development models almost without concern for historical chronology. It was as if each nation developed without any knowledge of what other nations had done. Theda Skocpol did learn from this criticism and therefore explicitly said in the introduction to her book that she would emphasize the world historical context, including the experience of former revolutions:

→ effects "Thus, I shall work into my analysis the effects of the unique world-historical contexts of the eighteenth-century Russian and Chinese Revolutions, and I shall take into account the fact that Russian revolutionaries actually played a role in the Chinese Revolution through the transmission of Communist Party models and policies via the Comintern." (1)

This promise Skocpol did not keep. In her comparison

(1) p. 39

of how the French and Chinese revolutions broke out, she merely mentions that they happened "in very different particular times and circumstances."⁽¹⁾ She does not, for instance, inquire into the publication, shortly before 1911, of the first Chinese books about the French Revolution, translated from the Japanese. The same can be said of her comparison of the French and Russian revolutions.⁽²⁾ It gets much worse when she deals with events more closely inter-related. When analyzing the Prussian Reform Movement 1807-1814 she completely disregards the influences from the French Revolution and from Napoleon's reforms. Napoleon is just considered to be an "external pressure", comparable to the debt crisis of Louis XVI and the forceful opening by Admiral Perry of the Japanese ports.⁽³⁾ It is not only revolutionaries who learn from past experience, but also counter-revolutionaries and reformers. The use that historical actors have made of history indeed forms a challenging field of inquiry.

When Skocpol compares the Russian and Chinese revolutions, she mentions, as promised, the influence on China from Soviet communism, but only as part of her explanation of the fact that China, despite closer resemblance to the French Bonaparte Régime than

(1) pp. 80-81. (2) pp. 234-235. (3) pp. 104-109.

to ~~trans~~ Russia, ended up with an outcome more like ~~the Stalin~~ Stalin's Soviet Union than Napoleon's empire.

It is difficult to logically compare the Vietnamese to the French, Russian and Chinese revolutions as a separate independent entity since both the French, Russian and Chinese revolutionary experiences were so manifestly present in the preparation for and implementation of the Vietnamese Revolution. If the August Revolution is being compared to its great predecessors, the comparison would resemble the one you make between a daughter and her parents. In such a comparison similarities are normally ascribed to genetics and education, not to a set of ~~similar~~ ^{similar} causes, but independent external causes. ~~In fact~~ One plausible explanation, in fact, for the forcefulness of the Vietnamese Revolution, is the strong influence in that country from all ~~the~~ the three great revolutionary cultures, first the Chinese, then the French and, from 1920 onwards, the Russian; and the lesser influence from non-revolutionary reformable ^{political} cultures such as the British and Japanese. In this context, American influence is ambiguous because it has called for liberation from colonialism, but not from economic exploitation and class domination.

Historical traditions, cultural influences, learning from experience have not been worked

into Skocpol's analysis. She just seems to have smuggled it into the text here and there in the form of general statements and a few precise observations. I really don't think this is due to neglect on the part of the author. It should rather be seen as a necessary consequence of the flawed assumption that generalizable theories can be established by comparing independent historical cases of complex processes. Such processes are seldom independent. They are remembered, ~~as~~ ^{as} ~~from~~ ^{from} traditions and are used as basis for programs. Such traditions are to some extent kept alive by the historical profession. One basic difference between the French and later revolutions is that the latter ones have been prepared and organized by proclaimed revolutionary parties. The only modern revolutionary attempts that I can think of which have had the same improvised character as the French, are those directed against regimes considering themselves part of the revolutionary tradition. When the tradition so to say belongs to the regime, young revolutionary movements have no roots to build their organizations on. While in Paris in May-June this year, I heard a lecture by an English historian on the crowd in the French Revolution. He pointed to a range of striking similarities to what was just then happening in Beijing.

But Deng Xiaoping had more historical experience to build on than either the Beijing students or Louis XVI. According to a Hong Kong journal, Deng had at a party meeting lectured his comrades on the mistakes of the Empress Dowager prior to 1911. I would assume that at this moment, both in Beijing, other Chinese cities and in numerous Chinatowns and campuses around the world, little groups of Chinese intellectuals are meeting to discuss their May-June 1989 experiences, trying to analyze it in the light of what they can learn from textbooks about similar events in the past, in China and elsewhere.

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The last weakness ^{in Skocpol's method} I would like to point my finger at is an overemphasis on structuralist explanations. In her analysis, the structure of the state and ~~its~~ its relationship to the landed aristocracy determine the ability of the government to implement the reforms which are necessary to get through a crisis and thus avoid revolution. In the rural areas, the class structure determines the occurrence of widespread peasant revolts. In general, Skocpol performs her structural analysis in a convincing and fruitful way; ~~because~~ she avoids the vagueness so frequent among structuralists. Theda Skocpol is admirably precise. Structures are

As the Epitaph
for source

described as organized relations between classes and institutions, either allowing or preventing certain forms of human action. Still I think she goes too far in explaining ~~historical~~ events as structural necessities. This is for instance the case when she sees Jiang Jieshi's 1927 crack down in Shanghai as something he had to do. ⁽¹⁾ Surprisingly enough, she attributes Tsar Nicholas II with a certain ability to change the course of history, ⁽²⁾ but the personality ~~and~~ ideology of Josef Stalin ~~was~~ ^{was} of no importance. This strategy won in the 1930s because it was the only possible strategy. Stalin's autocracy is seen as a necessary product of the Russian Revolution. ⁽³⁾

Theda Skocpol deserves credit for having avoided the normal fallacy of describing ~~a~~ ^{modern} revolutions merely as results of plans, efforts and lucidity on the part of the great revolutionary leaders and parties, ⁽⁴⁾ but Skocpol moves too far away from this. It is apparent in the following global statement:

"To activate their potential political capabilities the Chinese communists have had to do the very sort of things they have done [...]". ⁽⁵⁾

(1) p. 246. (2) pp. 97-98. (3) pp. 225, 231. (4) See p. 172.
 (5) p. 279.

Neither the choices of the revolutionaries nor those of the "ancien régime" or the subsequent counter-revolutionary leaderships can be explained solely as structural necessities. The leaders had more than one option which could activate their potential capabilities. This does not mean that I believe the leaders of the regimes which were established in ~~the wake of~~ the great revolutions (Napoleon, Stalin, Mao, Ho Chi Minh) led their nations, parties and armies toward ends planned long in advance. I ^{rather} agree with the Scandinavian philosopher Jon Elster:

"Revolutions are carried out by classes or class alliances with certain goals, but those goals are almost never achieved. A "successful revolution" is a revolution in which [or after which, ST] the revolutionaries maintain the [levels of] power, not a revolution leading to the realization of their intentions." (1)

This is also in accordance with Skocpol's definition of a successful revolution.

(1) Jon Elster, "Revolusjon", PAX-lexikon, Oslo, Pax, 197_- - 197_-.

I may in the foregoing have conveyed the impression that I am a "disillusioned historian" engaging my batteries in a frontal attack against comparative method in general and Theda Skocpol in particular. That is by no means the case. One of the two reasons why it has been really exciting for me to read her book and examine her method, is that I share her passion for comparisons. Although I don't believe in the possibility of building a generalizable theory of revolution, at least not with Skocpol's ~~double~~ complex definition of the term, I think systematic individualizing comparisons can be fruitful in shedding light on each case as such, and also in contributing ~~to the tradition of world historical consciousness. Such reflections can be open to acquisition and further reflection by Beijing students, Polish and South African trade unionists, Vietnamese review editors and keep alive traditions in reflections on political theory and philosophy.~~ ^{keeping alive a stimulating reflection within a} I only criticize Skocpol's methods here in order to discover ~~what~~ ^{the} sort of comparisons that I myself find to be most fruitful.

The other reason why I am fascinated by Theda Skocpol's book, is that some of the results of her analysis fit so well with the Vietnamese August Revolution. She could very well have included it as her fourth case.

Why didn't she do that? One obvious reason was the lack of historical studies available in Western languages of so recent an event. Another reason was that Stoept considered the Vietnamese Revolution to be of another sort than the French, Russian and Chinese. It is true that in her concluding chapter she speaks of "social revolutions like the French, Russian and Chinese [...]" and lists "Mexico between 1911 and the 1930's", and post Second World War revolutions in "Yugoslavia, Vietnam, Algeria, Cuba, Bolivia, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Ethiopia." But then she proceeds to state that most of these had an essential part of their background in colonialism and therefore required a specific analysis of the role of colonialism. In fact she warns against comparing her own three with all the more recent cases. The ~~recent~~ anti-colonial ones require comparisons in "their own right," she says. (1) In her concluding chapter she raises the question of whether her arguments can be used on other than her own three cases!

"In a sense," she writes, "the answer is unequivocally 'no'." (2)

This makes the reader wait for a "But" or "Yet"

(1) p. 290 (2) p. 288.

or "Skill". It comes after four pages of warnings and is so general that it should be easy to accept:

"Yet a focus on the nexes of state/state, state/economy, and state/class relationships remains useful for deciphering the logic of social-revolutionary causes and outcomes, from France in the 1790s to Vietnam, Angola, and Ethiopia in the 1970s" (1)

No emphasis
in orig.

I think some of Skocpol's findings are more directly applicable to the Vietnamese Revolution than she seems to believe herself, even if I agree that French colonialism contributed a dimension to the Vietnamese Revolution, which was also present in the American Revolution, but not in the French, Russian and Chinese. I would especially particularly like to emphasize the importance Skocpol attributes to external pressure, related to ongoing wars or to debts from recent wars, as a necessary cause for the initial success of revolutions in supplanting existing regimes. She objects explicitly to the still quite widespread belief that revolutions evolve as necessary results of internal class struggles. ~~with~~ The old regimes fell, says Skocpol,

(1) p. 292.

not as a consequence of pressure from class contradictions, but "because their existing structures made it impossible for them to meet the particular international military exigencies that each had to face [...]" As soon as the institutions of the state fell apart, fundamental conflicts were set in motion, both on the central political level and in the villages. The disintegration of the suppressive organs of the state (army and police) allowed peasant revolts to spread rapidly and effect changes in class relations "that otherwise would not have occurred." (1)

In contrast to Crane Brinton, who in The Anatomy of Revolution (1938) (2) compared the process of revolution to a fever, and to Georges Savyer Pettee, who in The Process of Revolution (also 1938) (3) gave prophylactic prescriptions to governments wanting to avoid revolutionary crises, Theda Skocpol is more concerned with the causes and outcomes of revolutions than with their cycles and processes. The first half of her book deals with the causes. She makes a point of the fact that none of the three revolutions occurred in the economically most advanced industrial societies of their time. Instead they occurred in agrarian states threatened by pressure or competition from economically

(1) p. 285 (2) Reprinted as "Vintage Book" in N.Y. 1965.

(3) Reprinted in N.Y. by 196.

were advanced states (This is not necessarily true for France 1789). She further argues that all of her three social revolutions evolved as a result of the coincidence of three factors:

(a) crisis
↑
external pressure

(a) A political crisis developed as an effect of external pressure which either manifested itself in defeats on the battlefield (Russia/China) or war debt (France).

(b) erosion of government authority

(b) The King, Emperor, and their governments were not capable of resolving the crises because they did not command sufficient authority in relation to the landed gentry (the dominant class) or, in the case of Russia, because the repressive organs of the state fell apart.

(c) widespread peasants revolts

(c) An agrarian structure, providing basis for collective action, combined with the absence of effective repression, opened up for widespread peasant rebellions. (In the early phase of the drawn out Chinese revolution, this was less apparent in China than in France and Russia).

Skocpol demonstrates, through her Prussian, Japanese and Russian (1905) counterpoints that when external pressure did not lead to social revolution there and then, it was due to the absence of either (b) or (c), or both. Her analysis, both of the erosion of state power, of agrarian structures

and of the inbuilt possibilities for mass revolt, are most often convincing. The most stimulating parts of her book are those where she approaches each revolution separately with the same set of questions. Since she only studies three cases, she has been able to acquire a much better knowledge of each case than what is normal in comparative sociology. Skocpol's States and Social Revolutions provides a fine groundwork, I think, for someone setting out to study either one of the three great revolutions, or other ones such as the Vietnamese. It has stimulated me to put precise, and I hope pertinent, questions to my sources.

Which questions does Skocpol's book make me ask to the Vietnamese Revolution? It makes me look for the same three causal factors as she has emphasized:

- (a) A political crisis resulting from external pressure;
- (b) Erosion of ~~the~~ the state because the government does not command authority over the dominant class, or because the repressive organs fall apart;
- (c) An agrarian structure providing basis for revolt.

You may recall that I wanted to add a fourth factor:

(d) More or less organized elite groups with revolutionary ambitions.

What I intend to do (not here today, but in the book I intend to write) is to explain how these four factors coincided in Vietnam 1945.

I shall ask:

(a) How did external pressure ^{generate} ~~affect~~ a crisis for the French colonial regime in Indochina, and how did the regime cope with the crisis from 1940 to 1945?

(b) Why did the crisis ultimately lead to the destruction of the state, first of all its repressive institutions? And why did not the Japanese replace those institutions with new ones, and why did not the Allies prepare for an immediate reoccupation of Indochina after the ~~these two answers to these~~ Japanese surrender?

The answers to these questions should explain the power vacuum which made the August Revolution possible. In my view, it is essential, in a study of the causes of the Vietnamese Revolution, to analyze in some detail the strategies of the Second World War and show how they created the occasion for ^{the} revolution. ~~In a similar way I think~~ A study of the October Revolution ought to analyze the events of February 1917 and their background in First World War

strategies and the erosion of the Tser's armies. A book on the causes of the August Revolution ought to explain the events of March 1945 and the war strategies ~~that~~ causing the French colonial army to disappear from the scene. Kerenky and Tran Trong Kim played similar transitory roles.

The study of the background for the ~~revolutionary~~ occasions is the one half of the causal analysis. The other half is to examine the nation, the classes and the action.

Since the Vietnamese Revolution was not only an internal revolt against a defunct or unadjustable regime, but also a national liberation from foreign rule, this ~~for~~ second half must ~~also~~ include a discussion of how nationalist sentiments and demands for independence evolved:

- How fiercely was ~~resentment~~ ^{the} foreign rule resented? How strong was the aspiration to national independence among the various social classes?

- Did the agrarian structure carry a potential for widespread rural revolts? How did the 1944-45 famine in northern Vietnam ~~affect~~ influence this potentiality?

- How strong were the various organized elite groups? Why were groups with revolutionary ambitions stronger and better organized than those who wished to preserve the social order?

Were the revolutionary parties strengthened during the Second World War? Were they able to cooperate with each other?

These are the main questions I would like to ask about the Vietnamese Revolution in 1945. What then about the relative importance of each causal factor? Were all necessary? Were they sufficient to cause revolution, or should yet other causes be drawn into the analysis?

In order to consider that kind of questions, it is necessary to establish a number of more or less explicit contrafactual hypotheses. Would there have been a revolution if not (a), or (b), or (c), or (d)? If becoming too explicit, such contrafactual hypotheses become ridiculously speculative. They should be used with much care. But then we are left with systematic comparison as the only way to establish contrafactual hypotheses with some sort of empirical basis.

Should I then ~~try~~ try to replay Skocpol's comparative study, only with a less complex and more punctual definition of revolution, including Vietnam as the fourth case? I don't think so. Too many of my critical remarks to Skocpol would also apply to my own attempt. Still I find it fruitful

political and theoretical traditions with direct influence on later revolutions. During the whole period since the end of the 18th century, historians in France, Britain, the United States and innumeral other countries have studied, discussed and written about the French revolution, and the dominant concepts of that original revolution have varied in accordance with the strength and direction of the revolutionary tradition in each historical phase. Each revolutionary wave (1830, 1848, 1871, 1905, 1917, 1945 and 1968) motivated new generations of intellectuals: politicians, authors, historians and political scientists, to study and reappraise the French revolutionary experience. Their reflections in turn influenced the further development of the tradition, and its historical role in providing practical and ideological guidelines for revolutionary action. The historiography of the French Revolution thus in fact reflects the history of the revolutionary tradition as such.

Still I have not as yet found fully satisfactory solutions in ~~French the~~ ~~historian~~ works on the French Revolution to the problem of deciding the relative explanatory force of each causal factor for a given revolution. Since I feel obliged to reject the possibility

of doing this by ~~comparing~~ replaying Skocpol's comparison, I have looked for other comparative possibilities. The main criteria for the choice of cases for comparison ought to ~~be~~ be the closest possible resemblance as far as all causes but one are concerned, and the greatest possible difference in outcome. In addition, the cases should either be so independent of each other that I can disregard influences from earlier to later cases, or so evidently dependent on each other that such influences can be adequately taken into account as a causal difference.

By employing these criteria I have found two sorts of comparison which I think are likely to illuminate the explanatory power of each cause. The first is based upon close resemblance as to nation, location, and actors, but difference as to situation and outcome. It is a comparison of the successful 1945 revolution with the failed Vietnamese revolts of 1930 and 1940. It is the same sort of comparison as the one Skocpol made between Russia 1917 and 1905. When conducting this comparison I shall have to take into account that learning from the 1930 experience had an impact in 1940 and 1945, and that learning from the 1940 experience influenced the actors in 1945.

The other sort of comparison is one which holds the situations as identical as possible, but nations, actors and outcomes as different. If the situation is defined as an occasion arising from a power vacuum at the Japanese capitulation in August 1945, it might be possible to compare the ~~the~~ Vietnamese Revolution to the contemporary political events in Korea, Manchuria, Taiwan, the coastal regions of China, Java, Singapore and Malaya, but not to Thailand where the ruling class had maintained control of the state throughout the war, and not to Burma or the Philippines whose capitals had already been occupied by Allied forces at the time of the Japanese surrender. I have for some time been struggling with these comparative options, but have felt compelled to give them up, partly because I would need to read so many books, ~~partly~~ on other countries than Vietnam, partly because the situations, at the Japanese surrender, were not so identical after all. The time lag between the Japanese capitulation and the arrival of Allied forces differed. Events during the last months before August were also very different. In the case of Java, or Indonesia, there was the additional problem of deciding whether that country experienced had a revolution or not. Did the establishment

of the Indonesian Republic aim at and lead to radical social change? I still believe that it is possible to undertake a fruitful comparison of the 1945 events in Vietnam and Java, but it would require a deeper understanding of Java than I feel able to acquire.

There are two other countries, however, which had situations in 1945 a lot more similar to that in Vietnam, but still did not have revolutions. Laos and Cambodia were, along with the three Vietnamese "Ky" (Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina), under the authority of the same colonial state, French Indochina. The repressive institutions of the French colonial administration disappeared there too, in March/April 1945; and at the Japanese capitulation, there was a temporary power vacuum, although ~~the~~ French forces returned more rapidly to Laos than to Cambodia and Vietnam. I shall therefore discuss the reasons for the lack of August Revolutions in Cambodia and Laos or, to put it more precisely, for the failure of the revolutionary attempts in those two countries, as compared to Vietnam.

Thus, in the concluding chapter of the book I am going to write, after having examined, in part 1, the war strategies ~~creating~~ ~~to~~ the revolutionary situation, and, in part 2, the process leading from the formation of the ~~status~~

~~to the action~~ nationalist and revolutionary movements to the decisive action, I shall ask and try to answer two comparative questions:

1) Why was there a Vietnamese Revolution in 1945, but only failed revolts in 1930 and 1940'?

2) Why was there an August Revolution in Vietnam, but not in Laos or Cambodia?

As of today, I am only able to ask. Maybe you could help me find the answers.

Points from the discussion

- American Revolution not revolution but civil war.
- 1) - Radical aims or consequences.
- 2) Short definition. On the question when
 - What causes a regime to collapse.
 - and that collapse to be followed by a successful revolution by actors with aims of radical change?
 - revolutionary regime.

Carl F. Egan.

- 1) - Calling almost anything a state?
 - Can you have revolution without a city?
- 2) Ted R. Gurr: Why the Revolt?
 - Expectations / Capabilities.
 - Famine

P. Mann: In VN writings, the events of March 1975, referred to as overtake of south, while Syng was called incurrection. uses term revolution.
 Tinsley Chicks 1946 Petitions refer to August

as over of eye, and connected.

Greg Lockard: pre-insurrectionary activities from
May 1945.

- Counter-Rev. before Revolution.
- Spontaneous revolution.

P. Merv

Wrote like: - Widespread moral revolt.
only apparent some years
later.

Symbiotic ul. days were revolution

Pete

Counter-Rev, Post-Rev.

Rod Aya editor Theory & Society (Journal)
wrote article(s) on Revolution ± 1980

Anthrop-Sociol. Centre

Univ of Amsterdam

Oude Zijds Achterburgwal 185

1012 DK Amsterdam

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11.30 office of Geog.

e) food policy (in VN context)

Duiker Vu Ky

DANG NGUYEN ANH (Institute of Sociology)

Government Center
 + Swedish Compound
 + Bicycle 60-70 \$ for East German

+ cable to say you are coming

no travellers cheques

go to Perfume Pagoda (Chùa Hương) ①
 Hòa Hảo - old 110 capital
 Hòa Bình =
 Lạng Sơn - Chinese Banker
 Hải Phòng - Vinh Hai Lang
 Đồ Sơn Cát Bà

John Tessitore
 at the University Dormitory.

Hotel - Huế = Sông Hương
 Hotel Di Nham = Nôn Nước
 Nhà Trạng = Gaad Hotel

Paper presented
to Historical
Inst. Inst. Navin
13.10.89

Introduction

Very honoured to speak to so many distinguished Vietnamese scholars. Will therefore do my best to give you a ^{first} ~~short overview~~ ^{summary} of Norwegian historical research, ^{second} of my own research into the international background for the opportune moment, a favourable occasion, for the Vietnamese August Revolution, and third a briefing on the document collections in French, British and American archives. I'll try to use 30 minutes on each of these 3 subjects, and take a short break in between them.

I. Norwegian Historical Research

1) Snorre Sturlasson : Heimskringla

2) Ernst Sævi

1814

- (1945)

1884 ←

1905

- heroic Viking age
- Dark centuries
- National awakening
→ 1814
- Fight for full independence

3) Halfdan Kohrt

Edward Bull

Important leaders of the Norwegian Labour Movement. Strongly inspired by marxism, but died, especially Kohrt, to amalgamate the theory of class struggle with the idea of a national tradition of struggle for national liberation.

Peasant ↔ bourgeois

arbeider ↔
worker

worker-peasant alliance

electoral victories in 1933 and 1945

4) Sverre Steen

J. A. Seip

National consolidation

cynicism

plunge into details. + social, economic studies

5) Internationalization

- NATO - Halvdan Lange, Magne Skardheim, Olav Riste

U.S. - oriented

G. Lundestad, H. Plass

- France : Kåre Tønnesen

- 3 World Studies : Siverson, Ruyterstad, T.L. Enklester

- My own generation. Myself and my collaborators

II. Background for The Opportune Moment

1. The Nation - Front - Party - Insurrection
(purpose of visit here, not talk about)
2. The Favourable Occasions
 ↑
 War (esp. 1814, 1917)
 1789

Therefore necessary to study war strategies:

Use map.

- A) Developments June 1944 - Dec. 1944
 - (Normandy invasion, Soviet advances.)
 - MacArthur and Nimitz in Pacific
 - Mountbatten in Burma
 - Chong-ying hard pressed by Ichi Go offensive
- B) France: De Gaulle - Madent
- C) UK: Churchill - Eden - Mountbatten - SOE
- D) China: Chou Kai-shek, Lou Yung, Chou Fa-kwei
- E) Soviet Union: Far away, but preparing for entry war against Japan.
- F) USA:
 - Roosevelt - Wedemeyer - Harley
 - State Dept supported France
 - Military est. not interested in IC
 - Perception of France and its purposes
 - Harley's operation
(effects on coal and rice)

G) Japan (quote 12. March Party declaration)
3 points.

Japan was fooled by the U.S. deception

H) Okinawa changed picture before war
Japs. understood had done a mistake
Dun Tung thin instead of Dien.
Cuong De

I) Plans for autumn offensive from China.
Wakemeyer's plan targeted exactly the
areas of the liberated zones.
Victims

J) Then sudden capitulation as result of
strict city it was all atomic
bombs.

Surprised everyone. French not ready.
British not ready. U.S. lost interest.
Chinese not quite ready, although they
came, but in Nam instead of Chung
Pa-Kwei

K) Effect: Temporary power vacuum
with war just. The
extensive opening moment for an uprising occurred,
just as the ICP had the 7th National
Congress convened the famous congress at Tan
Tao. You know the rest of the
story: The Party at the Viet Minh
quickly seized the opportunity and
orchestrated a general insurrection which became
a successful revolution.

G) Japan's economic growth has been rapid since the late 1960s. Japan was a member of the OECD.

H) Economic growth in Japan was rapid since the late 1960s. Japan was a member of the OECD.

I) The Japanese government has been successful in maintaining a high level of economic growth since the late 1960s.

J) The Japanese government has been successful in maintaining a high level of economic growth since the late 1960s.

K) The Japanese government has been successful in maintaining a high level of economic growth since the late 1960s.

III. Archives

France: - AN - ADM - MAE
- SMO - SHM - Nantes
- Private Papers
Many important doc's for your own
internal history.

Great Britain - PRO - FO - PREM
- CAB - Grassy

U.S.A. - Nat. Arch.
- Presidential Archives
- Personal Papers (Washington &
Wood (last.))

Japan: Nat. Defense Ag. Publ. in J.SEA.H.

China: (Private Home Museum in 1958)
- Kunming - Nanjing.
Chang Fa-kwei's archives.
(in HCM in prison)

- Year of bicentennial: Exhibits in Nat. Lib. Great historical traditions: ^{James, Lafayette, Michie, School,} ^{Voisard, my to other countries.} ¹⁷⁷⁶⁻¹⁷⁷⁶ ¹⁷⁷⁶⁻¹⁷⁷⁶
- Vietnamese history 1945-1975 is also an important part of world history. Therefore historians for my countries ~~work~~ are interested in that history. This is an ~~asset~~ favourable because it draws great attention to your country, but much is feared because don't know VN society (both at U.S.). In addition ^{most} ^{done} ^{much} ^{expect} ^{counter-revolutionary} ^{historical} ^{tradition.} ^{impaired.} ^{but} ^{much} ^{remains} ^{to} ^{be} ^{done.} High time you take up the challenge, and make your archives available, plunge yourself into your archives, publish and translate, interview veterans,

The way to get funding is to make outstanding
scholarship, bring new sources to light, new
theories and ideas.

organize seminars. ✓ Many great occasions in
the years to come:

1990: No di Mich's 100's anniversary

1991: VM 50 years

1995: 50 years since August Rev.

My dear colleagues, I'm sure we ^{shall} meet
again.

Tô Uyen: Had opportunity to read article not
here before your article. The incident was
1945. You are one of your vicarious. Been very
interested in information esp. some docs. But we
had not had the occasion to read. But it is clear
to me that we had been discussing to clarify
some matters. You have pointed the intention
context for the Aug. Rev. Only there for one small
idea. It is about the policy of China towards
IC during the process of the revolution. You said
JD was not very interested in VN, and you said
that the Chinese policy was passed and controlled
by the American. I don't agree with you on that
point. As far as I understood the policy of JD
was a long standing scheme. That is a plan
called Chinese forced entry into VN. ^{with intention} But due
to the reasons of the international context, JD was
not permitted to implement his policy.

Quoc Agree that JD had instead priorities at the
time. At the time the relationship between Chong-gin
and military forces, JD went to the strength of
these central forces. Undoubtedly started fight between
factions in China at the time. You can see the
role of JD to take HCM out of prison in 1943.
The great thing that HCM did, was to exploit
differences between Chinese factions. That was
his interest in my Chinese schemes. Recently
back by King Chai. Books both in Taiwan
and Chinese remained on this issue. I'd like
to present a document very valuable to you
regards. The book is the book-man
of Le Tung Son one of the VN who had
active role in the end of the VN revolution

Chronology

7. 44 De Gaulle in Wash.
5.7. 44 Langfode parachuted into Tunisia
9. 8. 44 Comité d'Action created
17. 8. 44 ? Recapture of Paris
7. 9. 44 3 round message
11. 16. 9. 44 Quebec conference.
End 9. 44 U.S. military planning shifts from Taiwan to Luzon and Okinawa
End. 11. 44 Thuez to France
10. 12. 44 Franco-Soviet Pact
(22. 11. 44 ~~Cairo Conference~~)
12. 44 Burma Road opened
11. 44 Blairgot to Kandy
25. 10. 44 Norbant's resistance plan
early 12. 44 Japanese Guazri ang reaches IC Border
ca. 18. 10. 44 Stilwell replaced by Wedemeyer
early 12. 44 Withdrawal of Chien. lines from Burma
19. 2. 45 SETA approved by JJ
21. 10. 44 Cairo Conference
12. 10. 44 FDR meets Feraud
End 4. 45 CCI allowed to move to FE
18. 10. 44 FDR asks for Tunisia invasion plan
21. 10. 44 JB First draft plan ready
23 10. 44 U.S. recognition of de Gaulle's govt.
7. 11. 44 FDR selected
15. 11. 44 U.S. personnel ordered not to cooperate with Burmese in AC Asia
14. 9. 44 Tokyo decides to plan camp, but to try to continue cooperation with Burma
11. 44 Yoshizawa replaced by Matsumoto
24-26. 10. 44 Battle of Leyte Gulf
28. 10. 44 Tokyo decides to speed up mil. preparation but delay decisions
28. 12. 44 Major success endorsed by Tokyo as counter-offensive plan.

Discussion

Van Tass: We understand one of international aspects, necessary for me to have a clear access - out of the interest attraction of V.W. Underline in kind relations. You to consider international aspects as decisive factors. Because you will in the introduction speak, parallel 1814-1945. You will have an idea about reading VW refer VW evolution. That's your tip will be highly beneficial to me.. So I know that you meeting with VW history will enrich your understanding. So we are glad to see you as unique Nordic historian. Hope you will find history of my. too. connecting to audience in Scandinavia. Because we have discussed in the conflicting ideas since 1960 on the causes of the my. Rev.

Was it lucky? I think in your coming meeting, we shall have more time to go into details. Nevertheless I don't feel sure that you have that idea but you will have more conditions to understand the matter.

second section without any input and created section? discuss relationship between VW and Japan at the time. I don't know what he'd really, but I want to discuss what you mentioned that ~~was~~ when the threat of Allied landing, let the movement of Vichy's landing I don't think correct.

My reply

Van Tass On this point I would like you to go deeply into it in discussion with the historians. As far as I see it, your picture is not correct in that situation.

- 30.10.44 Wadewey crosses the hump
- 16.11.44 Stanley visits Wash. ^{W's} instruction for Wadewey
- 23.11.44 Halifax cables State Dept. for approval of Mountbatten's activities in IC
- 1.1.45 FDR refuses to get mixed up in
- 16.12.45 FDR refuses to accept de Gaulle's participation at Yalta
- 14.1.45 Donovan meets Mountbatten
- 16.1.45 Meeting Donovon - Mountbatten - Wadewey
- 17.1.45 Naley + attacks Liu ju, visits with Rents and US vessels
- 2.1.45 Nairon Plan ready.
- 7.2.45 Wed. / J.J. opposes Nairon plans.
- 28.2.45 Yalta
- 13.2.45 De Gaulle's Tet-talk
- 2.3.45 FDR reports to Congress
- 20-21.2.45 Mountbatten Wadewey meets de Wicart
- 6.3.45 Churchill agrees to send cable to FDR.
- 7.3.45 FDR meets Stanley and Wadewey
- late 11.45 Devere informed by type of resistance movement
- 8.12.45 Meeting in Comité d'Action
- 1.11.45 French decision to keep in touch with all ^{the} 5 theatres
- 12.1.45 Comité d'Action meets Langlade
- 25.1.45 Juin advised Modest to declare French neutrality in case of limited U.S. action
- 1.2.45 Juin opposes Modest's resistance plan
- 27-28.1.45 Hopkins in Paris
- 1.2.45 Meeting Wadewey - Sol
- 7.2.45 J.J. asks Pechhoff about IC
- 12.2.45 Chinese journal expects Allied capture of this phony
- 15.2.45 Com. d'Action → Com. in order
- 22.2.45 Pechhoff sees de Wicart
- 24.2.45 Devere warns de Gaulle against premature action

